

Mr. President, I now wish to speak about George O'Connor. Many who are in the energy field not only here in the Senate but across the United States know George O'Connor. He has served with me as counsel, on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee for a good number of years. He came to this city as a lawyer in 1980, working for the Stein, Mitchell & Mezones law firm as a litigator. He specialized in administrative law litigation before the Federal Trade Commission. He became a trial attorney for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Office of General Counsel in the Division of Hydroelectric Licensing in 1982.

He worked then as a legal advisor to FERC Commissioner Charles A. Trabandt from 1985 until 1993 and was responsible for environmental issues associated with energy projects. He returned to the FERC's Office of General Counsel until 1997.

In 1998, George joined my staff as a fellow, and it was not long before I realized I needed his talent on a full-time basis in the area of energy and natural resources. In the year 2000, he became directly involved with me and has worked in that capacity for a tremendous number of years. I must say that both George and I, at the close of the session for the August recess and the passage of the National Energy Policy Act, saw that as not only a culmination of a great career here in the Senate for George O'Connor but a substantial success for myself and other members of the Energy Committee who were much involved in that.

George has worked a total of 24 years in the Federal Government, and a total of 8 years in my office. I say, without question, I am going to miss George O'Connor. He is retiring to go downtown to do other things, and I am sure he will be back here when we need him helping us with his expertise and his talent. He is well known by all who associate with him as a tough but very fairminded and talented man.

I must say that George O'Connor has served my State of Idaho well, has served the Pacific Northwest well, where hydro is still a dominant producer of our electricity, and has served this Nation and the Senate well.

My hope for George O'Connor and Damon Tobias is that in their next life, which they are now about to assume, they will do well and be as successful in it as they have been as very talented and capable staffers here in the Senate.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire.

HONORING CHIEF JUSTICE WILLIAM H. REHNQUIST

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I wish to join with all my colleagues and with America in expressing our condolences to the Rehnquist family and, obviously, our great appreciation for his extraordinary service to this Nation. I hope at a later date to put in a more

extensive statement. He was a man whose commitment to the law was exceptional, but his commitment to the country was even higher. We are very fortunate to have had him as our Chief Justice and as a Justice on the Supreme Court for so long.

RECONCILIATION INSTRUCTIONS

Mr. GREGG. I rise today basically to speak about another issue, and that is a letter which I have received as chairman of the Budget Committee and which was sent to the majority leader, the Speaker of the House, and the chairman of the Budget Committee on the House side by the leadership of the Democratic membership of the Senate and the House—Congresswoman PELOSI; JOHN SPRATT, who is ranking member on the House Budget Committee on the Democratic side; Senator REID, who, of course, is the Democratic leader; and KENT CONRAD, who is the ranking Democratic member of the Budget Committee.

The letter asks that we indefinitely postpone reconciliation, reconciliation being the mechanism by which we address the entitlement spending and tax policy here at the Federal level. It is an outgrowth, of course, of the budget process.

Now, the letter itself, if I can look at it, although I can hardly see it—I wish they would send these letters in larger fonts so those of us getting older would not have to take out our glasses to read them. But, in any event, the letter itself is structured in a way to assert a number of items, boldly assert items which essentially are inaccurate. In fact, the boldness of these inaccuracies is such that it would be humorous if they were not going to. I am sure, become part of the nomenclature of the left in the country and, indeed, be carried forth by the echo chambers, such as National Public Radio, which speaks for the left.

But their language says this:

Now is not the time to cut services for our most vulnerable, cut taxes for our most fortunate, and add \$35 billion to the deficit.

That is the basic theme of the letter.

If allowed to go forward, this bill—

They are talking about the reconciliation bill—would likely cut programs that many victims of Hurricane Katrina will be relying on, including Medicaid, food stamps, and student loans.

Those two statements are, as I said, boldly inaccurate and reflect a failure to accept history and a failure to look at the specifics of the reconciliation bill as it passed the Senate.

Now that does not surprise me. I have to admit, and the folks who signed this letter readily admit, they did not vote for the budget when it first passed 8 months ago or 7 months ago, however long ago, 6 months ago. When it first passed, these four individuals and their caucuses strongly opposed putting in place here in the Congress a budget

that had fiscal discipline, and they voted against it. So it should not come as a surprise and this letter should not come as a surprise that they are still against it and they still want to indefinitely postpone the key mechanisms which will make this budget effective.

But what is a little surprising is that they would assert such inaccuracies in their letter. Let's begin with the tax inaccuracy. They must be ignoring or they must not just look at history. They must not look at the history of the Kennedy tax cuts and the Reagan tax cuts, and most recently the George W. Bush tax cuts because one thing we proved beyond any reasonable doubt is that when you significantly cut taxes on the productive side of the American economy, you create economic activity, and as a result, you create jobs and you give people work and you create revenues for the Federal Government.

The numbers are incontrovertible. In the last 3 years, revenues have been jumping dramatically relative to the base we hit as a bottom as a result of the recession we experienced as a result of the bubble bursting, the Internet bubble of the 1990s, and the effects of 9/11. In fact, 2 years ago revenues jumped by 9 percent.

This year, revenues are literally going to jump by more than that. The revenue projections for the next few years are projected to increase by 7 percent, 6 percent, 7 percent. And the deficit has dropped by over \$150 billion from the original estimates purely as a result of economic activity that has been stimulated in large part because we have reduced the tax burden on the productive side of the ledger and created an incentive for people to go out and invest. As a result, there is an incentive for people to create jobs.

We had some of the best job creation in the history of this country over the last 2 years. As a result, people are paying taxes and revenues are going up. It is totally ignored and misrepresented in this letter. More specifically, and I think the thing that I find most unreasonable about the terms of this letter—or, as I say, most boldly inaccurate—is its representation that the reconciliation instructions, as they relate to the mandatory accounts, will somehow affect programs that benefit people relative to the problems which we have in the South today as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Nothing could be further from the truth, be more inaccurate, or be more of an attempt to use the trauma and tragedy of Katrina to assert a political agenda here in the Congress of the United States, which they have been trying to assert, as I said, since they voted against that budget 6 months ago. The two have no substantive relationship, but there is an attempt now to use the political arena to try to link them up.

The fact is that the reconciliation instructions in this bill will in no way reduce student loans. In fact, the committee which has jurisdiction over this issue, under the extraordinarily able